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ABSTRACT

In the winter of 1989-1990, the Bureau of Applied Studies of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) conducted a major survey of alcohol and other drug use among students in public and private schools throughout the state. In addition to students in grades 7 through 12, who historically constitute the survey sample, this study included students who were at particular risk for dropping out of school. Also surveyed was a sample of residents in Division for Youth (DFY) facilities. This report focuses on survey findings for those youth who can be considered to be at high risk of engaging in alcohol and substance use. Three sections of the report deal with specific segments of youth-at-risk surveyed in the study: (1) students attending school on the day of the survey who otherwise indicate high rates of absence; (2) students attending alternative high school programs in New York City; and (3) residents of DFY residential facilities. Each section describes the demographic characteristics, substance-use findings, associated behaviors and help-seeking preferences for each segment of youth. A concluding section addresses the subpopulation of youth-at-risk who have dropped out of school totally and who are not represented in the study. (RJM)

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Youth-At-Risk in New York State

Alcohol and Drug Use Findings

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Youth-At-Risk In New York State:
Alcohol and Drug Use Findings

November 1993

Bureau of Applied Studies
New York State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services
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Executive Summary

Periodically, the Bureau of Applied Studies of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) conducts a major survey of alcohol and other drug use among students in public and private schools throughout the state. In the winter of 1989-1990, OASAS conducted the most recent survey, which sampled an especially large segment of the youthful population. In addition to students in grades seven through 12, who historically constitute the survey sample, this study included students in special programs who were at particular risk for dropping out of school, as well as a sample of residents in Division for Youth (DFY) facilities.

This report focuses on survey findings for a specific segment of the state's youthful population, namely, those youth who can be considered, by virtue of their behavior, to be at high risk of engaging in alcohol and substance use. Three sections of the report deal with specific segments of youth-at-risk surveyed in the study: students attending school on the day of the survey who otherwise indicate high rates of absence; students attending alternative high school programs in New York City; and residents of DFY residential facilities. Each section describes the demographic characteristics, substance use findings, associated behaviors and help-seeking preferences for each segment of youth. Comparisons are made with other youth in the survey to give perspective to the findings. A concluding section of the report makes inferences about the subpopulation of youth-at-risk who have dropped out of school totally and who are not represented in the study.

A major finding of the report is in the comparison of substance use rates between New York students who are serious truants and youth residing in DFY residential facilities. Lifetime use rates of alcohol and other drugs among "serious truants" are frequently as high or higher than lifetime use rates for youth now residing in DFY residential facilities. Most dramatically, the survey findings show that eight percent of DFY residents have already used drugs by injection compared to 11 percent of serious truants still enrolled in school. The following are highlights for each of the sections in the report.

Truancy Among New York State Students

Based on survey items on absence and cutting classes, New York State students in 7th through 12th grades are divided into three groups: never truanted, moderate truants and serious

truants. Demographic characteristics, substance use rates, associated behaviors and help-seeking behavior are analyzed by level of truancy. The following are major findings.

- For **every** substance queried in the survey, serious truants show the highest rates of use, followed by moderate truants and then students who never truanted. Thus, for the major substances used:
  - lifetime alcohol use by 95 percent of the serious truants, 88 percent of the moderate truants, and 62 percent of the never truanted;
  - lifetime cigarette use by 77 percent of the serious truants, 59 percent of the moderate truants and 30 percent of the never truanted;
  - lifetime marijuana use by 56 percent of the serious truants, 32 percent of the moderate truants and 10 percent of the never truanted; and
  - lifetime cocaine use by 20 percent of the serious truants, six percent of the moderate truants and two percent of the never truanted.
- An estimated 25 percent of the serious truants use drugs at a "substantial" or "extensive" level and are probably in need of services compared to 10 percent of the moderate truants and three percent of the never truanted.*
- Serious truants are much more likely than moderate truants and those who have not truanted to have experienced alcohol and other drug problems associated with difficulties with friends, driving under the influence, and getting into trouble with the police.
- Serious truants are much more likely than the moderate truants and non-truants to have been referred to a dean, principal or guidance counselor because of school-based misbehavior, to have "beaten up someone on purpose," or to have "taken money or something of value that didn't belong to you."
- All the findings suggest that extensive truancy is a powerful marker for youth-at-risk and for the commission of a whole range of antisocial behaviors.
- Interestingly, 10 percent of serious truants have sought help for an alcohol and substance use problem in just the several months since school began in September.

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*Please see definitions on page 7.

- Students tend to prefer "friends" as a source of help for alcohol and drug problems irrespective of their degree of truancy.

- As a preferred source of help, "parents" are chosen more readily by the non-truanting, than the moderate truants and the serious truants. Only 27 percent of serious truants selected "parents" compared to 40 percent of moderate truants and 53 percent of the non-truanting.

Students Attending New York City's Alternative High School Programs

Alternative high schools are designed for students who, because of special needs, may benefit from a program of instruction different from that offered in the traditional high school. A sample of students drawn from 10 alternative high schools within the New York City public school system were surveyed and the results were compared to other New York City students, aged 15 years or older, because of the comparatively older age of alternative school students. The following are the major findings.

- Relatively slight differences existed between alternative high school students and other students in rates of alcohol and cigarette use; however, fairly dramatic differences existed in rates of other substance use. For example:

    - lifetime marijuana use by 52 percent of alternative school students as opposed to 26 percent of other New York City students.

    - lifetime cocaine use by 18 percent of alternative school students as opposed to six percent of other New York City students.

- An estimated 13 percent of alternative school students use drugs at a substantial or extensive level and are probably in need of services compared to six percent of other New York City students.

- Alternative high school students are more likely than other students to have driven a car while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or to have gotten into trouble with the police because of alcohol or drugs.

- Alternative high school students, however, while twice as likely as other students to report getting into difficulties with friends because of drugs, were as likely as other students to report getting into difficulties with friends because of alcohol. Alternative high school students also were only slightly more likely than other students to report higher rates of problem behaviors that were not necessarily related to drug and alcohol use (e.g., taking money or something of value that didn't belong to you, being sent to the Dean's office).

- Interestingly, alternative high school students were almost as likely as other New York City students to have sought help for a substance abuse problem since school began in September (6 percent and 5 percent, respectively).

- The rank order of preferences for help with alcohol and drug problems among alternative high school students showed "friends" in first place followed by an "outside counselor" and "another adult." Other New York City students, 15 years and older, also preferred "friends," followed, however, by "siblings" and an "outside counselor."

Residents of New York State Division For Youth (DFY) Facilities

A sample of 703 residents in 12 randomly selected DFY facilities (i.e., residential facilities for youth) were surveyed and the results were compared with those of students who were classified as "serious truants." The following are the major findings.

- Rates of lifetime use of substances were not consistently higher among DFY residents. While DFY residents compared to serious truants reported higher rates of use of marijuana (70 percent versus 56 percent) and cocaine (26 percent versus 20 percent), serious truants reported higher rates of use of steroids (8 percent versus 4 percent), and inhalants (40 percent versus 15 percent). Serious truants also reported higher rates of use of alcohol and tobacco.

- Although the rates of substance use of DFY residents were not consistently higher than that of serious truants, DFY residents did report higher rates of drug and alcohol-related problem behaviors; especially getting into trouble with the police. For instance, drug-related difficulties with friends were reported by 25 percent of DFY residents as opposed to 14 percent of serious truants. Driving under the influence of drugs was reported by 27 percent of DFY residents and 15 percent of serious truants, and drug-related difficulties with the police were reported by 25 percent of DFY residents and 8 percent of serious truants.

- Interestingly enough, DFY residents were more likely than serious truants to give "pro-social" responses regarding preferences for sources of help for drug or alcohol problems. DFY residents were more likely than serious truants to prefer as a source of help parents (62 percent versus 27 percent), medical doctor (42 percent versus 24 percent) or a school or facility counselor (53 percent versus 30 percent). Serious truants, on the other hand, were more likely to prefer friends (72 percent versus 53 percent).

Implications for a School Dropout Population

To make inferences for the school dropout population that could not be surveyed directly, conclusions are drawn from findings for "serious truants," students in New York City's alternative high school programs, and DFY residents that might relate to dropping out.

An important inference is drawn from the fact that--contrary to expectation--the rates of substance use were not uniformly higher for DFY residents than for serious truants. This suggests that levels of use do not necessarily "peak" subsequent to the act of dropping out, but very possibly while the students although truanting heavily, are still enrolled in school. In other words, in the sequence of events in the lives of these serious truants, high substance use rates may precede dropping out entirely, and possibly precede an array of anti-social behaviors which had occurred in the lives of DFY residents. While students who exhibit serious patterns of truancy have traditionally been the targets of drug prevention efforts, these findings suggest that more intensive forms of intervention are strongly indicated.

YOUTH-AT-RISK IN NEW YORK STATE: ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE FINDINGS

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Youth-At-Risk in New York State: Alcohol and Other Drug Use Findings

Introduction

Periodically, the Bureau of Applied Studies of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) conducts a major survey of alcohol and other drug use among students in public and private schools throughout the state. In the winter of 1989-1990, OASAS conducted the most recent survey, which sampled an especially large segment of the youthful population. In addition to students in grades seven through 12, who historically constitute the survey sample, this study included students in special programs who were at particular risk for dropping out of school, as well as a sample of residents in Division For Youth (DFY) facilities.

The self-administered questionnaires used in the survey maintained the anonymity of the students, and all but the DFY questionnaire were available in both English and Spanish. Specific questions tapped the use of alcohol, tobacco, psychoactive prescription drugs, and a variety of illicit substances. Several additional items asked about demographic characteristics of the respondents and any consequences attributed to alcohol and other drug use.*

This report focuses on a specific segment of the state's youthful population, namely, those youth who can be considered, by virtue of their behavior, to be at high risk of engaging in alcohol and substance use. Included in this analysis are students who truant heavily; students who attend special high school programs because they are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out and have returned to school; and youth residing in residential facilities. The literature is replete with studies showing the association of alcohol and other drug use and absenteeism, dropping out of school, and juvenile crime.** The goal of this analysis is to describe these youth in New York State, their substance use and associated behaviors, and their need for help.

A second goal of the analysis is to make inferences about "school dropouts", a population missed by these surveys because they have left school and have not enrolled in any other program. The New York State Education Department estimates that at least 40,000 youngsters in grades nine through 12 drop out of high school during an academic year and do not enroll in another program.

Each of the sections of the report that follows deals with a segment of youth-at-risk surveyed in the study: students attending school on the day of the survey who otherwise indicate high rates of absence; students attending alternative high school programs in New York City; and

*The appendix describes the study's methodology.

**Please see references at the end of the report.

residents of DFY facilities. Each section describes the demographic characteristics, substance use findings, associated behaviors and help-seeking preferences for each segment of youth. Comparisons are made with other youth in the survey to give perspective to the findings. A concluding section of the report makes inferences about the subpopulation of youth-at-risk who have dropped out of school totally and who were not directly represented in the study.

Truancy among New York State Students

Among the many questions included in the survey, three asked about truanting: the number of days of school skipped without parental permission, the number of days on which students cut classes, and the longest period of time students stayed away from school without parental permission. For the first question, the time period of interest was "since school began in September"; for the second, it was the 30 days prior to the administration of the survey; and for the third, it was lifetime. Cross-tabulation of the three items yielded a three-fold classification scheme comprising the following categories.

- Students who were classified as "non-truants." These were students who did not skip school, did not cut classes, and did not report a period of time during which they were away from school.

- Students who were classified as "moderate truants." This category included three different subcategories:

  - students who did not report skipping school or cutting classes, but did report a period of time during which they were away from school;

  - students who reported skipping school or cutting classes but did not report a period of time during which they were away from school; and

  - students who reported skipping school or cutting classes on no more than three days and also reported a period of time during which they were away from school.

- Students who were classified as "serious truants." These were students who reported skipping school or cutting classes on four or more days **and** also reported being away from school for a period of time without parental permission. Findings are reported only for students who were enrolled in regular schools. Data on students enrolled in alternative schools are presented in the second section of this report.

Demographic Characteristics of Truants

Overall, 13 percent of students engaged in the more serious forms of truancy described here (Table 1). This number represents a subsample of 1,847 students which can be projected

to a population of 166,000. Slightly over a third (35 percent or a projected 429,000 students) engaged in more moderate forms of truancy, based on a subsample of 7,490 students. Slightly over half (52 percent or a projected 636,000 students) reported that they had not truanted, cut classes or stayed away from school without parental approval, based on a subsample of 13,295 students.

Table 1 shows more females among those students who did not truant, and more males among students who displayed serious patterns of truancy. The majority of serious truants statewide were white (52 percent), and were located in New York City (53 percent). Nevertheless, compared to the statewide percentages, white students are underrepresented and New York City students are overrepresented among serious truants. There also is an overrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics among serious truants. This lower proportion of white students and higher proportion of minority students among serious truants probably reflects the sharp differential in student ethnic composition in New York City compared to the rest of the state. The majority of students enrolled in the City in grades seven through 12 are black and Hispanic; white students account for only a quarter of this student population.

Truancy, and Alcohol and Other Drugs

A comparison of alcohol and other substance use for different categories of truancy presented in Table 2 confirms the findings of other school surveys regarding the strong positive relationship between absenteeism and rates of substance use (i.e., the more extensive the absence from school, the higher the rates of use). Rates of use increased in absolute fashion with degree of truancy for every substance queried. For example, lifetime use of marijuana was reported by 10 percent of the non-truants as opposed to 32 percent of moderate truants and 56 percent of serious truants. Similar findings were obtained for crack (one percent of non-truants vs. four percent of moderate truants and 13 percent of serious truants); cocaine in any form (two percent of non-truants vs. six percent of moderate truants and 20 percent of serious truants); PCP (one percent of non-truants vs. two percent of moderate truants and 11 percent of serious truants); and inhalants, such as glue, solvents or nitrous oxide (11 percent of non-truants vs. 25 percent of moderate truants and 40 percent of serious truants).

Similar findings were obtained when comparisons were made of rates of nonmedical use of prescription drugs. For example, nine percent of non-truants, 22 percent of moderate truants, and 34 percent of serious truants reported that they had used prescription analgesics such as codeine, Darvon or Percodan "on your own without a doctor telling you to." Use of tranquilizers, such as Valium or Librium, was reported by two percent of non-truants, six percent of moderate truants, and 17 percent of serious truants, while use of stimulants or "ups" was reported by four percent of non-truants, 14 percent of moderate truants, and 29 percent of serious truants.

Even the more commonly used substances of alcohol and cigarettes showed a tendency to increase with truancy. Less than a third (30 percent) of the non-truants have smoked cigarettes as opposed to 59 percent of moderate truants and over three-quarters (77 percent) of the serious

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of New York State Students Attending Public and Private Schools by Degree of Truancy Grades 7 through 12, Statewide, 1990

	Total (N=1,231,000)	Never Truanted[a] (N=636,000)	Moderate Truants[a] (N=429,000)	Serious Truants[a] (N=166,000)
AGE				
12 or younger	10%	17%	5%	2%
13	16	22	10	8
14	17	19	16	12
15	17	16	18	21
16	16	13	20	23
17	16	11	21	23
18 or older	7	4	10	12
GENDER				
Male	50%	48%	51%	54%
Female	50	52	49	46
ETHNICITY[b]				
White	66%	72%	62%	52%
Black	15	12	19	20
Hispanic	13	10	15	21
GRADE				
7th-8th	33%	45%	21%	16%
9th-10th	36	32	38	41
11th-12th	31	22	40	43
HEALTH SERVICE AREA[c]				
Western New York	10%	10%	10%	8%
Finger Lakes	7	7	7	7
Central New York	8	10	8	6
Southern Tier	2	2	2	1
Northeastern New York	8	9	8	7
Hudson Valley	12	12	11	9
New York City	37	30	40	53
Nassau-Suffolk	16	20	14	10

Example of how to read the table: Among responding students enrolled in grades seven through 12 who had never truanted, 48 percent were male.

[a]Definitions based on students' responses to survey items on the number of days of school skipped, the number of days on which classes were out, and the longest period of time absent without parental permission.

[b]Although ethnic characteristics are presented here for the state as a whole, these characteristics vary by region, especially for New York City. In New York City, for instance, white students represent only a quarter of students enrolled in grades 7 through 12 whereas black students and Hispanic students represent the majority.

[c]Map of New York State appears on the next page.

Region 1	Western New York
Region 2	Finger Lakes
Region 3	Central New York
Region 4	Southern Tier
Region 5	Northeastern New York
Region 6	Hudson Valley
Region 7	New York City
Region 8	Nassau/Suffolk

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Table 2. Lifetime Drug Use by Degree of Truancy
New York State Students Attending Public and Private Schools
Grades 7 through 12, Statewide, 1990

TYPE OF SUBSTANCE[a]	Total (N=1,231,000)	Never Truanted (N=636,000)	Moderate Truants (N=429,000)	Serious Truants (N=166,000)
Marijuana	24%	10%	32%	56%
Cocaine (Not Crack)	5	1	5	18
Crack or Freebase	4	1	4	13
Any Cocaine	6	2	6	20
PCP (Angel Dust)	2	1	2	11
LSD	5	1	6	17
Other Hallucinogens	6	2	6	20
Any Hallucinogens	7	2	8	23
Inhalants	20	11	25	40
Heroin	1	*	1	6
Methadone (Illicit)	1	*	1	5
Tranquilizers[b]	5	2	6	17
Stimulants[b]	11	4	14	29
Sedatives[b]	6	2	8	20
Analgesics[b]	17	9	22	34
Cough Medicine[b]	8	4	10	17
Steroids[b]	2	1	2	8
"Look-Alikes"	4	1	4	12
Cigarettes	46	30	59	77
Chewing Tobacco	14	9	17	23
Any Alcohol	75	62	88	95
Beer	62	46	75	86
Wine/Wine Cooler	67	54	78	85
Liquor	51	36	64	78
Has Injected Drugs	4	1	4	11

Example of how to read the table: Among responding students who were classified as "serious truants", 56 percent have used marijuana at least once.

[a]Other Hallucinogens such as mescaline and psilocybin; inhalants such as glue/solvents or sprays, amyl/butyl nitrite, or nitrous oxide; tranquilizers such as Valium or Librium; stimulants such as amphetamines or prescription diet pills; sedatives such as barbiturates, Tuinal or Seconal; analgesics such as codeine, Darvon, or Talwin; "Look-alikes" include pseudo-speed or double dex as well as a variety of imitation pills.

[b]Refers only to nonmedical use of prescription drugs, defined as use "on your own, that is, without a doctor telling you to."

*Less than 1,000 students or 0.5%.

truants. Similarly, use of alcohol was reported by less than two-thirds (62 percent) of the non-truants as opposed to 88 percent of moderate truants and 95 percent of the serious truants. Heavy use of alcohol (i.e., the consumption of an average of six or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage) was reported by eight percent of non-truants as opposed to 22 percent of moderate truants and 38 percent of serious truants.

The tendency for rates of use to increase with truancy generally holds for the several time frames of interest: for lifetime experience, for use during the six months prior to the survey, and for use within the past month.

In addition to being asked about the use of specific substances, students also were asked about the lifetime frequency of drug injecting--a very serious mode of drug use. Like other use rates, the prevalence of drug injecting increased with degree of truancy. The percentage of students who reported injecting drug use ranged from one percent of non-truants to four percent of moderate truants to **11 percent of serious truants**. Thus, about one in nine students who truant heavily had already injected drugs.

Truancy and the Substance Use Hierarchy

To capture the overall seriousness of drug use rather than use rates for specific substances, a summary measure of drug involvement was constructed for students from seventh through 12th grade, known as the substance use hierarchy. This inclusive hierarchy consists of six levels of increasing use: ***Never Used, Prior Users, Infrequent Users, Regular Users, Substantial Users and Extensive Users.*** All students are therefore accounted for by this hierarchy. These levels emphasize the number of substances used (alcoholic beverages and tobacco products are excluded), use in the past six months, and frequency of use in the 30 days prior to the survey. More specifically, the levels of drug involvement were defined as follows.

- Never Used: those who have never used any substance in their lifetime.
- Prior Users: those who have used at least one substance in their lifetime but have not used any drug in the past six months.
- Infrequent Users: students who report having used one or two substances in the past six months with only infrequent use (i.e., one to three times) reported in the 30 days preceding the survey.
- Regular Users: students who have used three to six substances in the past six months with no substance other than marijuana used more than three times in the past 30 days. Students who used marijuana on the average of three times a week are also included.
- Substantial Users: students who have used seven to nine substances in the past six months or at least one substance other than marijuana on a weekly basis. Those who use

marijuana on an average of more than once a day (40 or more times in the past month) are also included in this group.

- Extensive Users: students who have used 10 or more substances in the past six months, or at least one substance other than marijuana more than once a day (40 or more times) in the month prior to the survey.

Table 3 compares findings for the substance use hierarchy by degree of truancy. Like the findings on rates of use of specific substances, findings for the hierarchy suggest that the extent of substance use increases with degree of truancy. While the proportion of students who had never used drugs declined from 75 percent of non-truants to 45 percent of moderate truants to 26 percent of serious truants, the proportion of students engaged in serious forms of drug use increased steadily with degree of truancy. The percentage of students who were classified as regular users increased from two percent of non-truants to seven percent of moderate truants to 12 percent of serious truants. Similar increases occurred for the percentage of students who were classified as substantial users (two percent to eight percent to 17 percent) and extensive users (one percent to two percent to eight percent). Thus, 10 percent of moderate truants and 25 percent of serious truants are in the two extreme categories of use, and are very likely to need services because of their substance use.

Truancy, Delinquency, and Drug and Alcohol-Related Problem Behaviors

In addition to questions on substance use, the survey also asked about other problem behaviors including consequences of alcohol and other drug use. Several questionnaire items asked about behaviors that are directly related to substance use (e.g., driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs). Other items asked about behavioral problems that are, for the most part, related to a school context (e.g., being sent by a teacher to the principal's office). Analysis of selected questions from both sets of items suggest that like alcohol and other drug use, the prevalence of other problem behaviors also tended to increase with degree of truancy.

Regarding the first group of behaviors, students were asked how often during the past year they engaged in certain drug- and alcohol-related problem behaviors such as getting into difficulties with friends, driving under the influence, and getting into trouble with the police. The findings displayed in Figure 1 indicate that the prevalence of all three behaviors, regardless of whether the behavior was drug or alcohol-related, also tended to increase with degree of truancy. For all three truancy categories, however, the percentage of students attributing these behaviors to alcohol use was consistently higher than the percentage who reported the behaviors as related to other drug use. For example, while the percentage of students who reported getting into trouble with the police because of other drugs ranged from less than one percent of non-truants to two percent of moderate truants to eight percent of serious truants, the percentage of students who reported trouble with the police because of alcohol use ranged from one percent to four percent to 13 percent. Somewhat higher proportions of students reported driving under the influence of other drugs (one percent of non-truants vs. 15 percent of serious truants) or alcohol

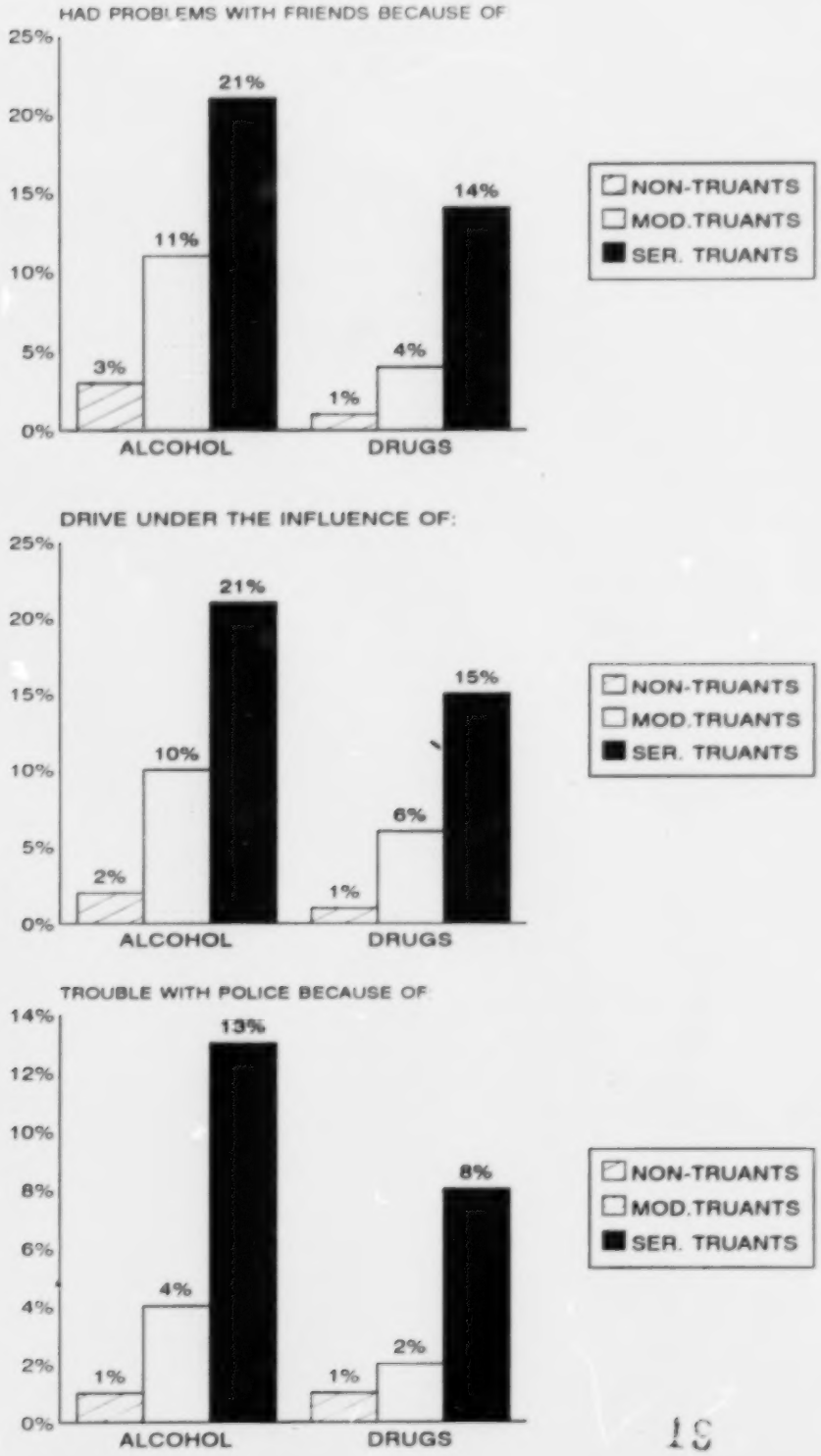
Table 3. Substance Use Hierarchy[a] By Degree of Truancy New York State Students Attending Public and Private Schools Grades 7 through 12, Statewide, 1990

	Total (N=1,231,000)	Never Truanted (N=636,000)	Moderate Truants (N=429,000)	Serious Truants (N=166,000)
Never Used	58%	75%	45%	26%
Prior User	13	10	17	15
Infrequent User	16	10	21	22
Regular User	5	2	7	12
Substantial User	6	2	8	17
Extensive User	2	1	2	8

Example of how to read the table: Among seventh through 12th graders who were classified as moderate truants, 17 percent were prior users.

[a]Substance Use Hierarchy is a classification of students which reflects the history and recency of drug use as well as the extent and frequency of use (see detailed explanation on the previous pages).

FIGURE 1: PROBLEM BEHAVIORS WITH ALCOHOL & DRUGS AMONG STUDENTS BY TRUANCY



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(two percent of non-truants vs. 21 percent of serious truants), or getting into difficulties with friends because of other drugs (one percent of non-truants vs. 14 percent of serious truants) or alcohol (three percent of non-truants vs. 21 percent of serious truants).

With respect to problem behaviors that were not necessarily alcohol- or drug-related, questionnaire items probed two types of misconduct: behaviors that occurred within the school setting (i.e., being sent to the dean, principal or guidance counselor for a behavior problem, having someone from home contacted by the school because of the respondent's misconduct); and behaviors that may have occurred outside of the school setting (i.e., "taken money or something of value that didn't belong to you" or "beating up someone on purpose").

The findings suggest that while the school-based problems were somewhat more prevalent than problems that occurred outside of the school setting, the prevalence of both types of behavior tended to increase with degree of truancy (Figure 2). For instance, the proportion of students who reported being referred to a dean, principal, or guidance counselor ranged from 14 percent of non-truants to 29 percent of moderate truants to 50 percent of serious truants. Similarly, the proportion of students who reported having beaten up someone on purpose ranged from seven percent of non-truants to 18 percent of moderate truants to 32 percent of serious truants. Clearly, all of the findings delineated above would suggest that extensive truancy may be a marker for "youth-at-risk" and for the commission of a whole range of antisocial behaviors.

Truancy and Seeking Help for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Problems

Given the tendency for alcohol and other drug use as well as associated problem behaviors to increase with degree of truancy, findings on the relationship between help-seeking behavior and degree of truancy become very important. Students were asked about actually seeking help and to whom they might go for help for a problem related to drug or alcohol use.

Regarding the issue of actually seeking help, students were asked whether they had sought help, other than from family or friends, for a problem in any way connected with their use of alcohol, marijuana or other drugs. The time period of interest was "since school began in September." Interestingly, seeking help appears to increase as the degree of truancy increases and the use of alcohol and other drugs increases. The proportion of students who reported seeking help for alcohol and other drug use ranged from two percent of non-truants to four percent of moderate truants to 10 percent of serious truants.

Regarding the issue of students' preferences for help, students were asked where would they go if they had a drug or alcohol problem. Several options were given, to which students were asked to respond "yes" or "no." The findings presented in Figure 3, show that "friends" constitute the most popular option for all students, irrespective of degree of truancy. Friends were preferred by 69 percent of non-truants, 74 percent of moderate truants, and 72 percent of serious truants. Nonetheless, the findings also suggest that the proportion of students who preferred other options clearly declined with degree of truancy. This was especially the case for

RAL PROBLEM BEHAVIORS BY DEGREE OF TRUANCY

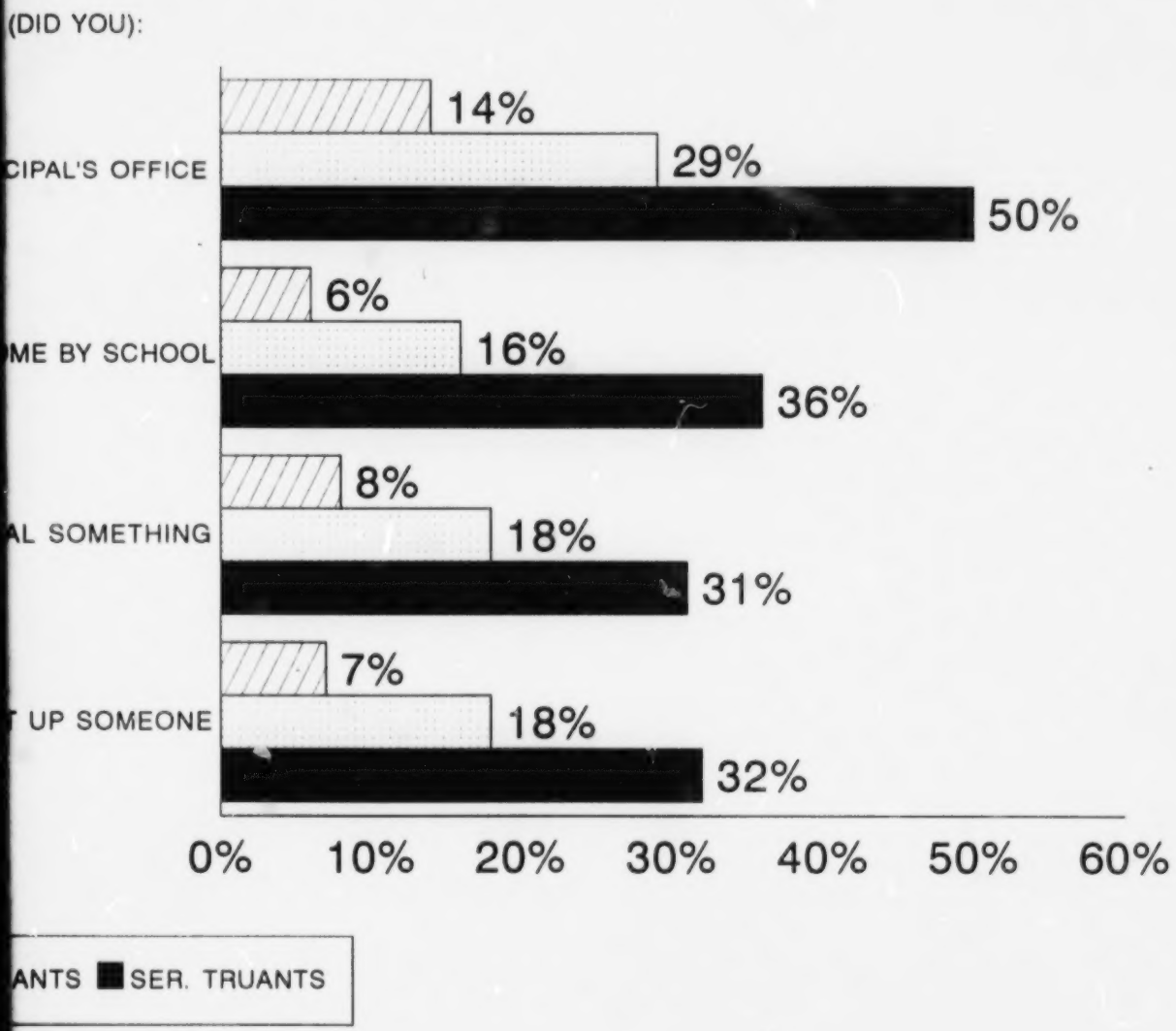
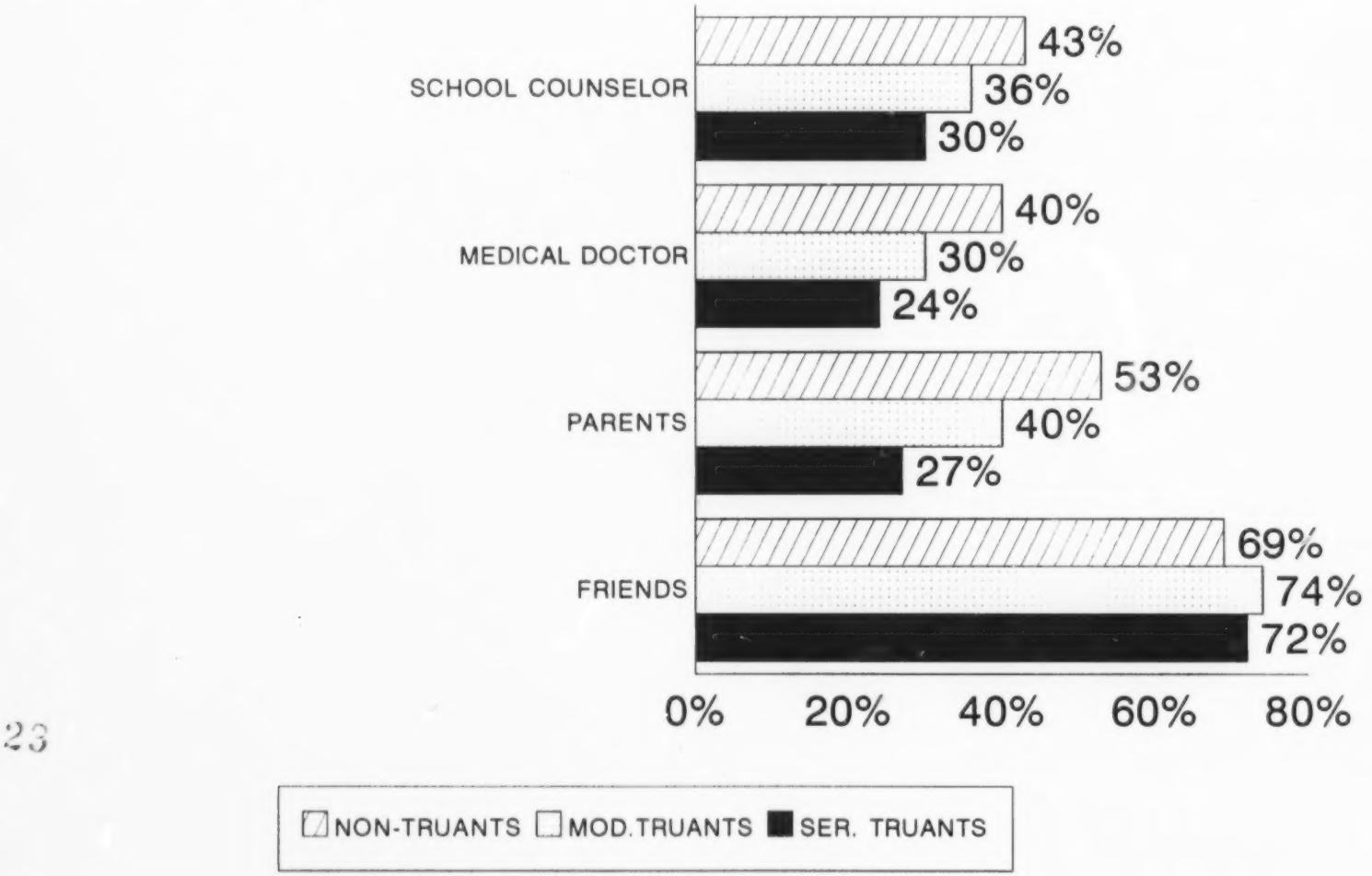


FIGURE 3: HELP-SEEKING PREFERENCES BY DEGREE OF TRUANCY

IF YOU HAD A DRUG/ALCOHOL PROBLEM, WOULD YOU GO TO:



OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

"parents" which was the stated preference of 53 percent of non-truants, 40 percent of moderate truants, and only 27 percent of serious truants. Clearly, the strong preference for "friends" as a source of help, among all students supports the usefulness of peer groups in school-based counseling programs--even among students who display patterns of extensive truancy.

Students in New York City Alternative High Schools

While the majority of youth attend school, OASAS recognizes that many youth who are at high risk are not part of the regular school system. To assess the prevalence of alcohol and other drug use by youth outside of the school system, two additional populations received special emphasis. The first was youth included in the New York City high school sample who were enrolled in New York City's alternative high schools; the second was a special survey of youth placed in New York State Division For Youth (DFY) facilities.

Findings from New York City students enrolled in alternative high school programs are presented in this section. Alternative high schools are designed for students who, because of special needs, may benefit from a program of instruction different from that offered in the traditional high school. In many cases, the students enrolled in these programs have dropped out of school and are attempting to either re-enroll in a regular high school or to attain a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). In other cases, however, alternative high school students are students who have been assessed to be in danger of dropping out of school and are receiving remedial services.

Within the total population of New York City public high schools, a number of schools have been designated as alternative high schools. Ten of these schools were randomly selected to be representative of the five New York City boroughs; a sample of 454 students were surveyed from these schools. This sample was projected to the population of 20,000 students enrolled in alternative high schools in New York City. Because these students were generally older than the regular high school population, findings from this sample are compared with findings from New York City students, 15 years of age and older.

Demographic Characteristics: Alternative School Students vs. New York City Students Aged 15 Year or Older

A comparison of alternative school students with other New York City students aged 15 or older showed that the former were comprised of more males, were considerably older, and more likely to be non-white. Specifically, males comprised 55 percent of the alternative school sample compared to 49 percent of the other New York City students (see Table 4). More importantly, differences between alternative school students and other New York City students in both age and ethnicity were much more dramatic. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the alternative school students were aged 18 and older compared to only 12 percent of the other students. In terms of ethnicity, while majorities of both groups of students were non-white, there

Table 4. Comparison of Demographic Characteristics, 1990: Students in New York City Alternative School Programs and New York City Students, Ages 15 years or Older

	New York City Alternative School Students (N=20,000)	New York City Students 15 Years or Older (N=245,000)
AGE		
15	3%	32%
16	8	29
17	25	27
18	31	10
19 Years or older	32	2
GENDER		
Male	55%	49%
Female	45	51
ETHNICITY		
White	10%	26%
Black	46	36
Hispanic	34	29
NEW YORK CITY BOROUGH*		
Manhattan	34%	19%
Bronx	17	19
Brooklyn	25	30
Queens	20	26
Staten Island	5	6

Example of how to read the table: Among seventh through 12th graders enrolled in alternative high schools in New York City, 34 percent were Hispanic.

*Defined as the borough in New York City where the school or program is located.

was a somewhat larger proportion of black and Hispanic students in the alternative school sample. Eighty percent of the alternative school students were black or Hispanic compared to 65 percent of other New York City school students, 15 years and older.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Alternative School Students vs. New York City Students Aged 15 Years or Older

In light of the age differences noted above, it is not surprising to find important differences between alternative school and other New York City school students in substance use experience. Table 5 reveals these differences for lifetime prevalence.

A large majority of all students reported some lifetime experience with alcohol (88 percent of alternative school students vs. 82 percent of other school students). However, lifetime prevalence rates for different types of alcoholic beverages showed no difference in use of wine/wine cooler but differences in use rates for beer and liquor. For beer and liquor, alternative school students were more likely to report use of beer (77 percent for alternative students vs. 67 percent for other students) and, to a lesser extent, use of liquor (63 percent for alternative students vs. 56 percent for other students). Similar differences were obtained when heavy use of alcohol was examined. The consumption of an average of six or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage was reported by 19 percent of alternative students as opposed to 15 percent of other students.

About half of all students reported lifetime experience with cigarette use with 58 percent of alternative school students and 48 percent of regular school students reporting such use.

Much more dramatic differences in lifetime prevalence were noted when experience with other substances was examined. Prevalence rates were two to three times higher among alternative school students than for regular school students, although in some cases the percent showing any use was low among all students. Marijuana, the substance (besides alcohol and tobacco) showing the highest prevalence rates for all students, was used by 52 percent of the alternative school students compared to 26 percent of the other students. For lifetime use of any cocaine, the prevalence rates among alternative students (18 percent) was three times higher than was the case for the comparison group (6 percent). Nearly the same was true when experience with crack or freebase (i.e., seven percent for alternative students vs. two percent for other students) and PCP (i.e., seven percent for alternative students vs. two percent for other students) were considered. Prevalence rates for alternative school students were nearly twice those of other students for both LSD (i.e., six percent vs. three percent) and other hallucinogens (i.e., 11 percent vs. five percent). The only exception was inhalants where the rates of use were the same (16 percent for both). Regarding nonmedical use of prescription drugs, prevalence rates were still somewhat higher for alternative school students. The only category of prescription drugs where alternative students showed similar use rates was analgesics (i.e., 15 percent of alternative students and 16 percent of other students had used).

Table 5. Lifetime Drug Use: Students in New York City Alternative School Programs and New York City Students, Ages 15 Years or Older 1990

TYPE OF SUBSTANCE[a]	New York City Alternative School Students (N=20,000)	New York City Students 15 Years or Older (N=245,000)
Marijuana	52%	26%
Cocaine (Not Crack)	17	6
Crack or Freebase	7	2
Any Cocaine	18	6
PCP (Angel Dust)	7	2
LSD	6	3
Other Hallucinogens	11	5
Any Hallucinogens	13	6
Inhalants	16	16
Heroin	2	1
Methadone (Illicit)	5	1
Tranquilizers[b]	8	5
Stimulants[b]	9	6
Sedatives[b]	8	5
Analgesics[b]	15	16
Cough Medicine[b]	10	7
Steroids[b]	4	2
"Look-Alikes"	3	2
Cigarettes	58	48
Chewing Tobacco	5	6
Any Alcohol	88	82
Beer	77	67
Wine/Wine Cooler	71	72
Liquor	63	56
Has Injected Drugs	6	3

Example of how to read the table: Among responding students enrolled in alternative high schools in New York City, 52 percent have used marijuana at least once.

[a]Other Hallucinogens such as mescaline and psilocybin; inhalants such as glue/solvents or sprays, amyl/butyl nitrite, or nitrous oxide; tranquilizers such as Valium or Librium; stimulants such as amphetamines or prescription diet pills; sedatives such as barbiturates, Tuinal or Seconal; analgesics such as codeine, Darvon, or Talwin; "Look-alikes" include pseudo-speed or double dex as well as a variety of imitation pills.

[b]Refers only to nonmedical use of prescription drugs, defined as use "on your own, that is, without a doctor telling you to."

When differences were examined for lifetime injecting drug use, once again alternative school students showed a prevalence rate that was twice that of other students (six percent vs. three percent).

The Substance Use Hierarchy: Alternative School Students vs. New York City Students Aged 15 Years or Older

Table 6 provides a comparison between alternative school students and other students and their levels on the substance use hierarchy (the summary measure of drug involvement described earlier). As expected, the percentage of other New York City school students who have never used was considerably higher (57 percent) than was the case for alternative school students (39 percent). Among those with some use within the past six months alternative school students showed slightly higher proportions in each category of drug use severity. Combining both substantial use with extensive use, on the other hand, we note that alternative school students were twice as likely to report substantial or extensive use (13 percent) than were other students (six percent). Interestingly, nearly equal proportions of alternative school students (three percent) and other students (two percent) showed extensive use.

Delinquency and Drug and Alcohol-Related Problem Behaviors: Alternative School Students vs. New York City Students Aged 15 Years or Older

An analysis of problem behaviors that were explicitly related to alcohol and other drug use revealed fairly consistent differences between alternative school and other students on most items. For example, as indicated in Figure 4, the percentage of alternative school students who had driven a car while under the influence of substances or had gotten into trouble with the police because of either alcohol or other drugs was uniformly higher than for other school students. Alternative school students were twice as likely to report getting into difficulties with friends because of drug use (i.e., six percent for alternative students and three percent for other students) but differences between the two were negligible with regard to drinking.

With regard to adolescent behaviors not necessarily related to drug and alcohol use, alternative school students generally reported somewhat higher rates than other New York City students although the magnitude of such differences were virtually negligible for some items (Figure 5). For example, alternative school students showed higher rates for "beating someone up on purpose" than other students (i.e., 19 percent vs. 13 percent) . On the other hand, differences are less marked with regard to being sent to the dean, etc. (i.e., 25 percent for alternative students and 22 percent for other students) and taking money or something of value not belonging to you (i.e., 15 percent for alternative students and 13 percent for other students).

Table 6. Substance Use Hierarchy:[a] Students in New York City Alternative School Programs and New York City Students, Ages 15 Years or Older 1990

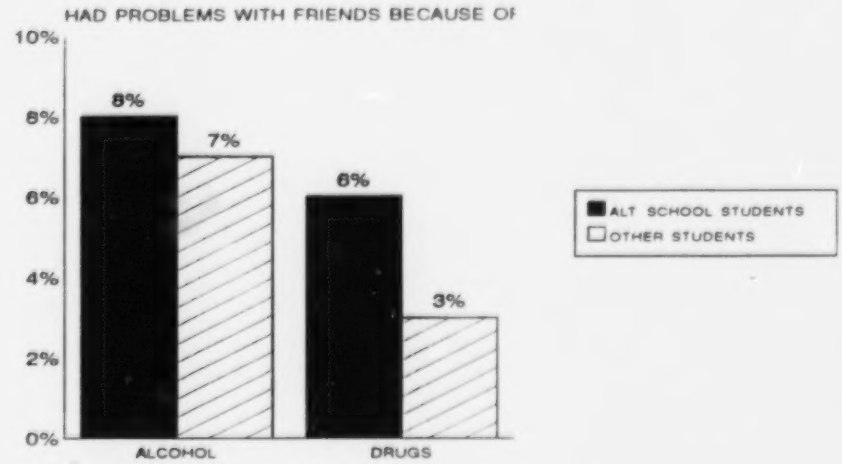
	New York City Alternative School Students (N=20,000)	New York City Students 15 Years or Older (N=245,000)
Never Used	39%	57%
Prior User	18	16
Infrequent User	23	16
Regular User	8	5
Substantial User	10	4
Extensive User	3	2

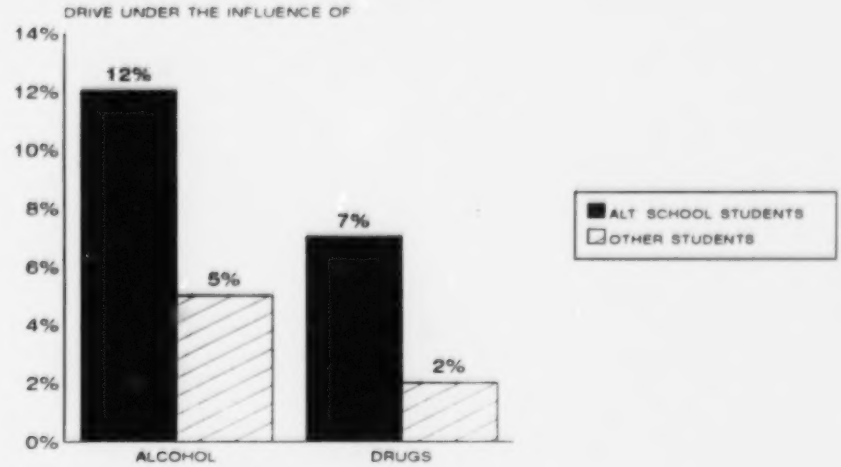
Example of how to read the table: Among responding students enrolled in alternative schools in New York City, 18 percent were prior users.

[a]Substance Use Hierarchy is a classification of students which reflects the history and recency of drug use as well as the extent and frequency of use.

FIGURE 4: PROBLEM BEHAVIORS WITH ALCOHOL & DRUGS

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENTS VS. OTHER STUDENTS, 15+ YRS





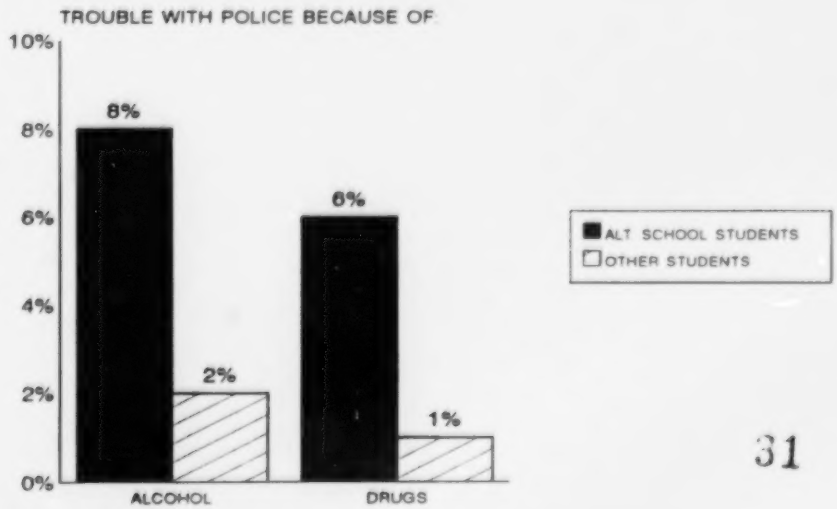


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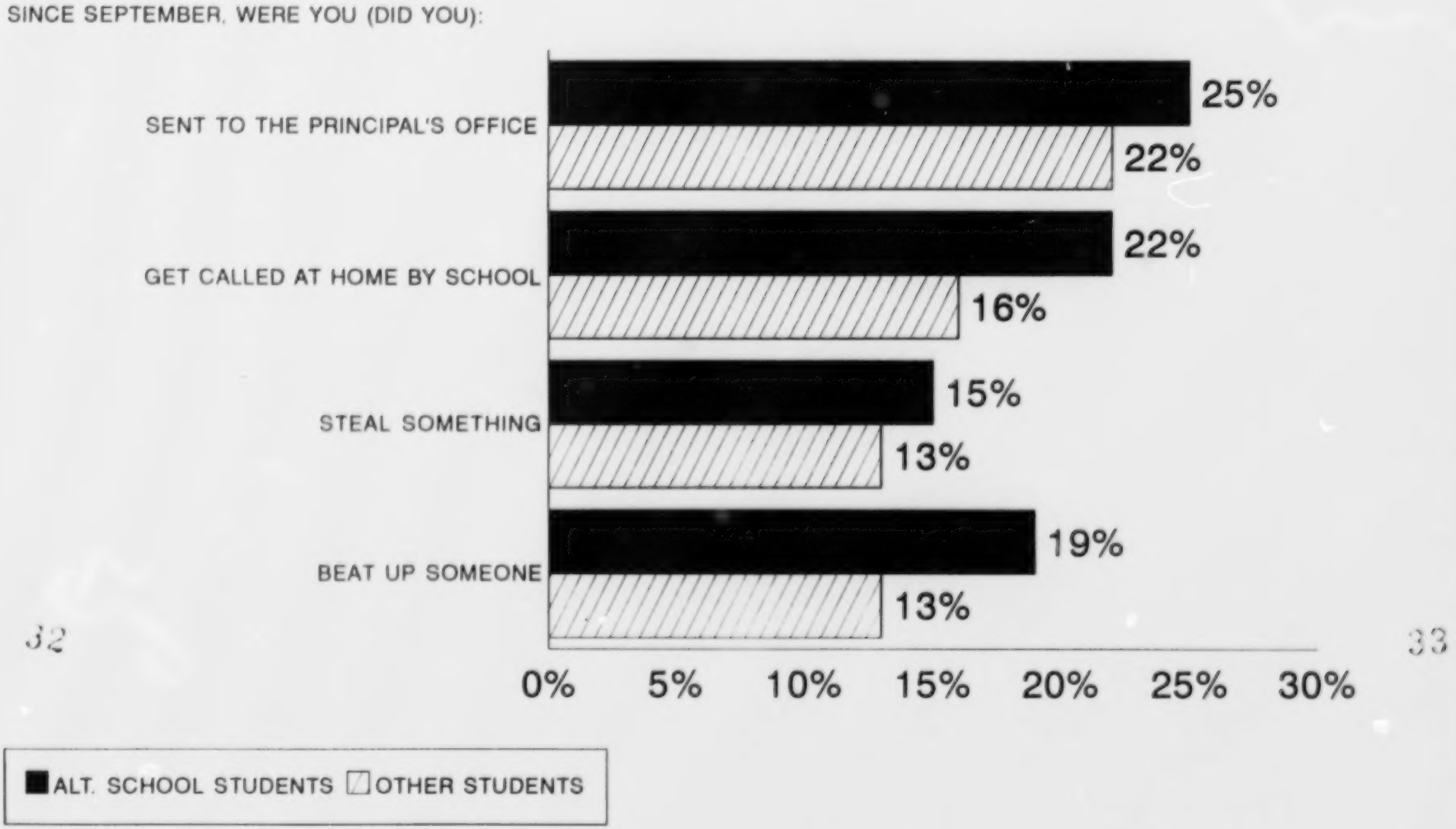
FIGURE 5: GENERAL PROBLEM BEHAVIORS
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENTS VS. OTHER STUDENTS, 15+ YRS



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Seeking Help for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Problems: Alternative School Students vs. New York City Students Aged 15 Years or Older

With regard to seeking help for substance abuse problems "since school began in September," differences between alternative school students and other students proved negligible. Six percent of alternative school students reported seeking such help as compared to five percent of other students.

When preferences for help for hypothetical problems with alcohol or other drugs were examined, differences between alternative students and other New York City students varied somewhat in rank order (Figure 6). Friends were mentioned most frequently by both alternative (53 percent) and other students (68 percent). Alternative school students mentioned "outside counselor" (51 percent) and "another adult" (48 percent) as their second and third preferences; other students mentioned siblings (48 percent) and "outside counselor" (47 percent) as their next most popular options. Interestingly, differences between the students who indicated "parents" as an option were negligible (i.e., 45 percent for alternative students and 44 percent other students).

Residents of Division For Youth Facilities

This section presents findings from the special survey of youth placed in residential facilities operated by the New York State Division For Youth (DFY). These youth take school instruction within the DFY facility and thus would not be found in a sample of youth enrolled in regular schools.

DFY residential facilities are located throughout the state and are organized in terms of three broad levels of security: secure, limited-secure, and non-secure. In order to design a probability sample of facilities, the total population of 29 DFY facilities was cross-classified by level of facility security and region within the state, facilities were then randomly selected from within each of these categories.

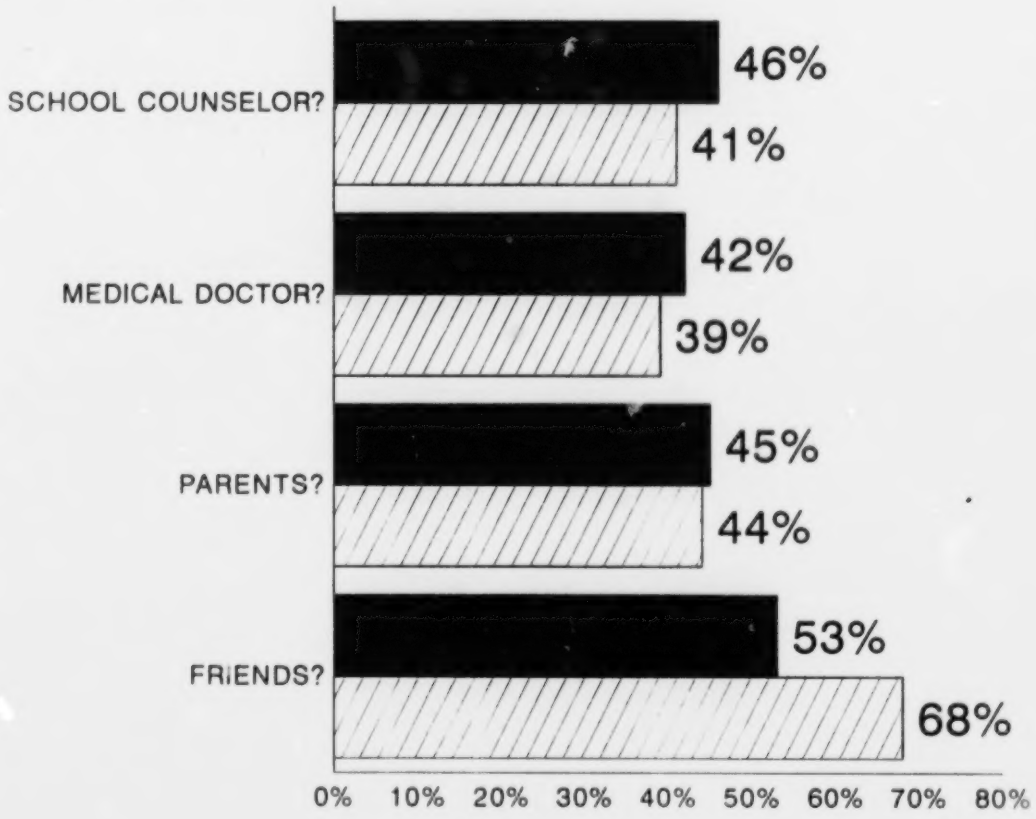
The sample ultimately consisted of 12 facilities--nine male and three female--with 703 residents. Data were collected in 1990 so as to coincide with the timing of the school survey.

The questionnaire completed by DFY residents was anonymous and self-administered, and closely parallelled the questionnaire used in the larger school survey with minor changes to reflect differences between the situation of DFY residents and that of students enrolled in regular schools. Efforts were made to survey all residents present in the facility on the day of administration. The sample of 703 residents represented more than half of the DFY resident population taking instruction in their facility at the time of the survey in the summer of 1990.

This analysis compares findings from the DFY sample with the "serious truants" from the school sample. The rationale for this comparison is based on similarity between the pattern of school absence prior to placement of DFY residents and that of the serious truants. For instance,

FIGURE 6: HELP-SEEKING PREFERENCES
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENTS VS. OTHER STUDENTS, 15+ YRS

IF YOU HAD A DRUG/ALCOHOL PROBLEM, WOULD YOU GO TO:



in the six months prior to placement with the Division, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the residents had skipped school on four or more days. This proportion is only slightly lower than the percentage of serious truants who skipped school on four or more days since school began in September (72 percent).

Demographic Characteristics: DFY Residents

More than half of the sample surveyed at DFY facilities were 15 or 16 years of age (Table 7). The vast majority were male (83 percent). Black residents represented almost half the sample (48 percent), with equal proportions of white (23 percent) and Hispanic youth (23 percent).

Alcohol and Other Drug Use: DFY Residents and "Serious Truants"

Table 8 compares lifetime rates of use for DFY residents and serious truants. DFY residents were asked about substance use which occurred **prior** to detention and placement with the Division. Consequently, only use rates in lifetime are compared in this analysis.

What is quite remarkable about the comparison of rates of lifetime use of the substances queried in the survey are the similarities in some drug use rates between DFY residents and serious truants in school, and, in fact, the lower rates for DFY residents than serious truants for still other substances. For example, 13 percent of the DFY residents and 13 percent of serious truants have used crack; 18 percent of DFY residents and 17 percent of serious truants have used LSD; and 74 percent of DFY residents have smoked cigarettes compared to 77 percent of serious truants.

Some substances that yield lower rates for DFY residents than for the serious truants include the category of inhalants (15 percent for DFY residents vs. 40 percent for serious truants), steroids (four percent vs. eight percent); and, interestingly, alcohol (82 percent vs. 95 percent). Heavy use of alcohol during lifetime was also examined, and DFY residents still show the lower rates. Consumption of an average of six or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage at one time was reported by 30 percent of DFY residents compared to 38 percent of serious truants.

Perhaps the most dramatic finding was the lower rate of injecting drugs for DFY residents (eight percent) than for serious truants (11 percent). Considering the extreme nature of this particular pattern of drug use, the fact that more than one in 10 serious truants report having injected drugs demonstrates the presence of a population of students still in school--albeit marginally--who have engaged in dangerous patterns of drug use.

Nevertheless, DFY residents show use rates for some illicit drugs that are higher than those shown by serious truants. For instance, 70 percent of DFY residents have used marijuana

Table 7. Demographic Characteristics of a Sample of Division For Youth Residents, 1990

	DFY Residents Truants (N=703)[a]
AGE	
12 Years or younger	3%
13	6
14	12
15	28
16	30
17	14
18 Years or older	7
GENDER	
Male	83%
Female	17
ETHNICITY	
White	23%
Black	48
Hispanic	23

Example of how to read the table: Among responding DFY residents, 23 percent were Hispanic.

[a]While other numbers of students cited in the report are projected to an estimated total number of students, the number of DFY residents is the exact number in the sample.

Table 8. Lifetime Drug Use: Division For Youth Residents and Serious Truants Attending Public and Private Schools in New York State 1990

TYPE OF SUBSTANCE[a]	DFY Residents (N=703)	Serious Truants (N=166,000)
Marijuana	70%	56%
Cocaine (Not Crack)	26	18
Crack or Freebase	13	13
Any Cocaine	26	20
PCP (Angel Dust)	14	11
LSD	18	17
Other Hallucinogens	16	20
Any Hallucinogens	22	23
Inhalants	15	40
Heroin	8	6
Steroids[b]	4	8
Cigarettes	74	77
Chewing Tobacco	15	23
Any Alcohol	82	95
Beer	76	86
Wine/Wine Cooler	66	85
Liquor	55	78
Has Injected Drugs	8	11

Example of how to read the table: Among responding DFY residents 70 percent have used marijuana at least once.

[a]Other Hallucinogens such as mescaline and psilocybin; inhalants such as glue/solvents or sprays, amyl/butyl nitrite or nitrous oxide.

[b]Refers only to nonmedical use, defined as use "on your own, that is, without a doctor telling you to."

compared to 56 percent of serious truants. Similarly, 26 percent of DFY residents have used some form of cocaine compared to 20 percent of serious truants.

In any case, both subpopulations show significant use of alcohol and other drugs in their young lives. DFY residents show particular use of illicit drugs; serious truants show particular use of the most available substances: alcohol, tobacco and inhalants. The most dramatic finding, however, is evidence of injecting drug use in both subgroups, but especially the higher rate of 11 percent for serious truants in school.

Delinquency and Drug and Alcohol-Related Problem Behaviors: DFY Residents and "Serious Truants"

Several questions were asked where the student could indicate whether in the year prior to coming to DFY, drug or alcohol use had ever led to the problem behaviors described in this report's earlier sections (i.e., difficulty with friends; driving under the influence; getting into trouble with police).

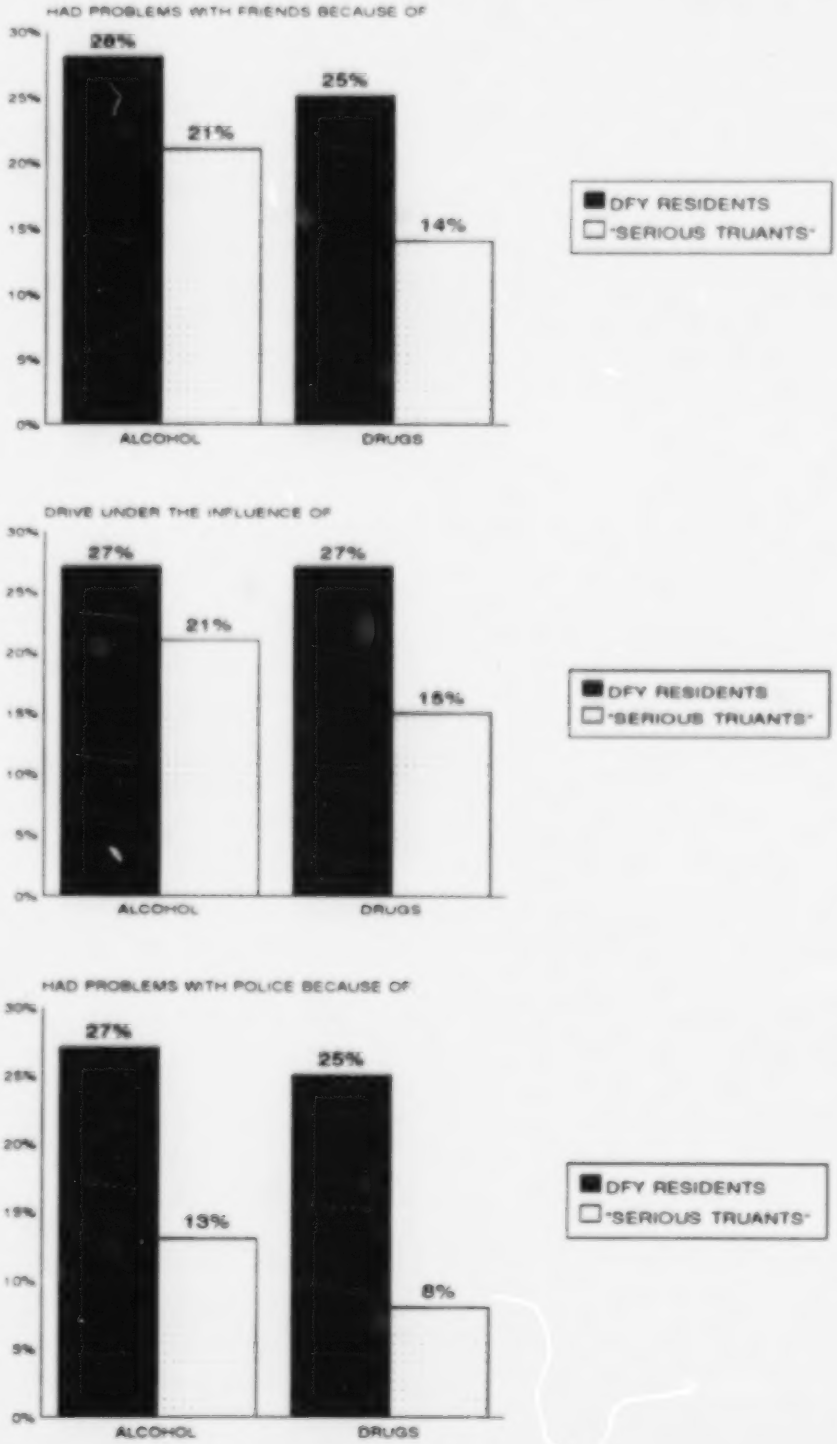
During the year before entering the DFY facility, 28 percent of the DFY residents and 21 percent of the serious truants had gotten into difficulty with friends because of drinking. Both groups acknowledged some extent of difficulties with friends because of other drug use, as well. For the DFY group, occurrences of drug-related difficulties with friends were about the same as those for drinking, 25 percent for other drugs vs. 28 percent for alcohol. Among the serious truants, 14 percent had experienced some drug-related difficulty with their friends--seven percentage points lower than drinking-related difficulties.

As might be expected, substantial numbers of young people in both groups acknowledged having driven a car under the influence of alcohol or other drugs during the past year. For the DFY residents, correspondingly higher proportions of youth acknowledged driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the past year. For both alcohol and other drugs, 27 percent of the DFY residents said they had driven a car while under the influence during the past year. Among the serious truants, 21 percent acknowledged driving under the influence of alcohol, and 15 percent under influence of other drugs (Figure 7).

Whether or not youth had gotten into difficulties with friends because of drinking or using other drugs, and whether or not they had ever driven under the influence or gotten into trouble with the police, as might be expected, proved to be a major point of differentiation between the DFY residents and the serious truants. In response to the question of whether they had gotten into trouble with the police during the past year, 13 percent of the serious truants, but 27 percent of the DFY residents, indicated that drinking had led to trouble with police. Again, 25 percent of the DFY residents but only eight percent of serious truants indicated that drug use had gotten them into trouble with police during the past year.

Many DFY placements occur because of an event or series of events that leads to the adjudication of a youth as delinquent and in need of placement. Most of these events involve

FIGURE 7: PROBLEM BEHAVIORS WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS DFY RESIDENTS VS. "SERIOUS TRUANTS"



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an arrest for an offense which, if committed by an adult, would be a crime. It is therefore not surprising that a relatively high proportion of the DFY residents have had police contact in the past year, compared with the school truants. Also of interest is the question of whether given sufficient time and exposure in the community, the serious truants will also find themselves in trouble with police, or whether they somehow, having stayed immune from police attention, will remain relatively immune.

Seeking Help for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Problems: DFY Residents and "Serious Truants"

An item on the questionnaire asked where they would go for help with a drug or alcohol problem. The questionnaire for DFY residents phrased the question in terms of various facility staff rather than school staff. Responses to this question revealed some rather clear-cut differences between the serious truants and the DFY residents (Figure 8). For example, among the serious truants, a relatively small number indicated that they would seek help from various professionals or other adults, and fully 72 percent said they would seek help from a friend. Among the DFY residents, on the other hand, the reply pattern indicated a substantially "pro-social" response. For example, a far greater proportion of these youth than the serious truants indicated school or facility counselor (53 percent of DFY residents vs. 30 percent of serious truants); another adult in school or facility (46 percent vs. 20 percent); an outside counselor (53 percent vs. 38 percent); parents (62 percent vs. 27 percent); siblings (60 percent vs. 42 percent); medical doctor (42 percent vs. 24 percent); another adult (58 percent vs. 32 percent). Interestingly, the choice of "friend" was considerably lower for the DFY group compared with the serious truants (53 percent vs. 72 percent).

Interpreting these results, which compare an institutionalized population with a group not currently incarcerated, is a somewhat hazardous exercise. The fact that the "help-seeking" responses of the DFY residents and the serious truants are at much greater variance than the behavioral (i.e., alcohol and other drug use) measures, however, indicates that the condition of being in residential care might be playing an important role in shaping these juveniles' responses.

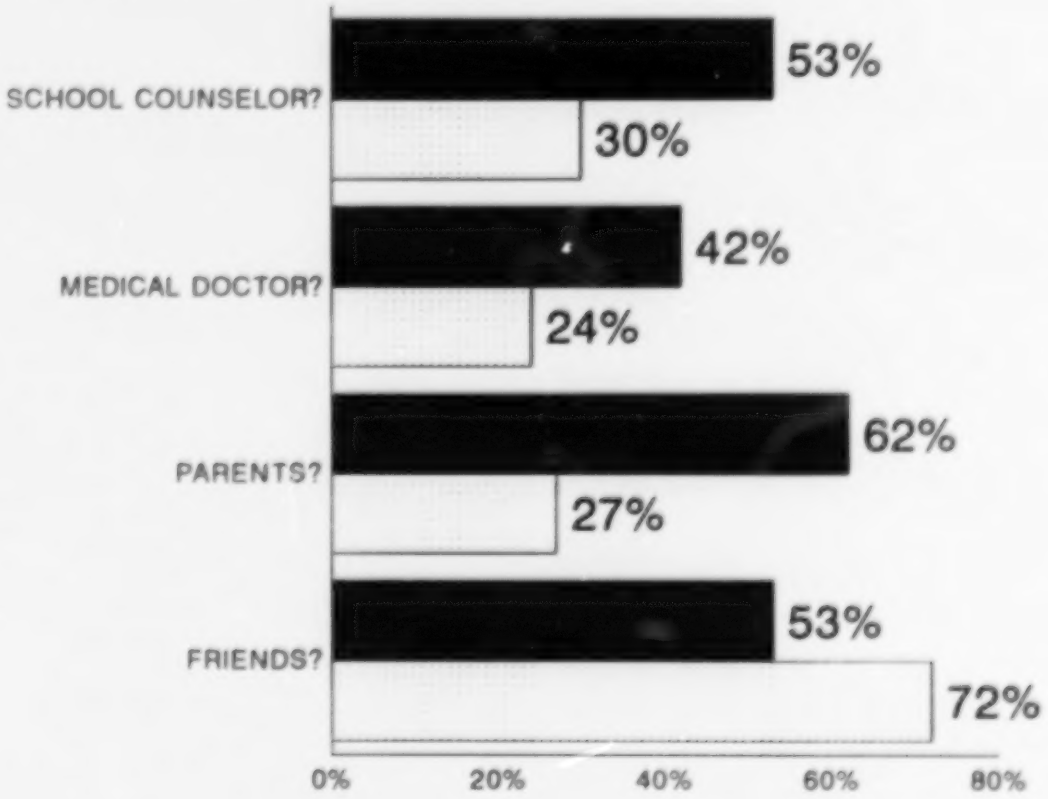
Conclusions and Implications for a School Dropout Population

To some extent, each of the subpopulations described in this report could be considered as representing a different point on the continuum of "youth-at-risk", and this is especially reflected in rates of substance use. Residents of DFY facilities had among the highest rates of substance use followed closely by the "serious truants" attending public and private schools throughout the state, and then New York City's alternative high school students.

Some of the differences in use rates and problem behaviors may be a function of demographic differences. For example, DFY residents were overwhelmingly male (83 percent) while the alternative school sample was limited to New York City students. Earlier analyses

FIGURE 8: HELP-SEEKING PREFERENCES DFY RESIDENTS VS. "SERIOUS TRUANTS"

IF YOU HAD A DRUG/ALCOHOL PROBLEM, WOULD YOU GO TO:



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suggested that males generally have higher rates of illicit drug use than females, and New York City students as a whole have lower rates than students in other parts of the state.

Demographic differences notwithstanding, however, it could be argued that the subpopulations of "serious truants" and DFY residents provide a way of "bounding" the school dropout population. The "serious truants" could be considered youth who may be in the initial phases of dropping out while DFY residents are youth who, by definition, are no longer enrolled in school and thus could be considered to be at the most extreme end of a dropout continuum. Alternative school students, on the other hand could represent youth who are either on the verge of dropping out or have dropped out and are attempting to return. Given the strong positive relationship found by previous studies between absenteeism and rates of drug use, it is not surprising that high rates of use were found among students who truant heavily and among youth who are no longer enrolled (i.e., DFY residents). The relatively lower rates among alternative school students, on the other hand, may have reflected the responses of youth who had dropped out and subsequently re-enrolled and thus, in a sense, could be considered to be in "remission".

Perhaps the report's most important finding is that, contrary to expectation, the rates of substance use were not uniformly higher for DFY residents than for serious truants. This suggests that levels of use do not necessarily "peak" subsequent to the act of dropping out, but very possibly while the students, although truanting heavily, are still enrolled in school. In other words, in the sequence of events in the lives of these serious truants, high substance use rates may precede dropping out entirely, and possibly precede an array of anti-social behaviors yet to surface. While students who exhibit serious patterns of truancy have traditionally been the targets of drug prevention efforts, these findings suggest that more intensive forms of intervention are strongly indicated.

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Appendix: School Survey Methodology

Although this report focuses on youth in seventh grade and higher, the "in school" component of the 1990 youth survey included a total sample of 34,516 students in grades five through twelve from randomly selected public school districts and private schools throughout the state. For the purpose of sampling, the state was divided into 32 geographic areas for public schools (fewer for private schools) and at least one school district was sampled from each area. All Health Service Areas in the state were represented, including metropolitan as well as nonmetropolitan areas in each. The table on the next page, displaying the distribution of the sample by grade level and Health Service Area, indicates that all grade levels were represented in each Health Service Area.

Special samples were drawn to represent areas with high minority enrollment. Seventy-seven public school districts were randomly selected to represent the several geographic areas of the state. Included in this number were all of the New York City public school districts. Of these 77 districts, 21 refused to participate. These 21 districts were replaced by 13 districts; of these 13, seven agreed to participate. Thus a sample of 63 public school districts agreed to participate in the survey. An average of four schools were selected from each of the participating districts, totalling 248 public schools. This group included a sample of 10 New York City public high schools that were designated as alternative high schools (i.e., high schools for students with special educational needs).

In addition, 65 private schools were randomly selected to represent the Catholic schools, other Christian schools, Hebrew day schools and nondenominational schools. Of these 65 schools, 16 refused to participate. These 16 schools were replaced by 15 schools; of these 15, five agreed to participate. Thus, a sample of 54 private schools agreed to participate in the survey.

Within each school, approximately four classes per grade (5 through 12) were randomly chosen. Usually English or Physical Education classes were chosen because these were required classes and thus permitted a sample of all students enrolled in the grades of interest within that school. The survey was then administered to all students present in the classes on the day of the survey. In those schools where parental consent was required, only students from whom parental consent was received were asked to participate in the survey.

Two questionnaires were used: one for the seventh through twelfth grades and another for the fifth and sixth grades. The questionnaires were designed for self-administration and printed in a format suitable for machine optical scanning so that processing could be easily accomplished. Pretesting (in a number of schools) showed that the questionnaires could be completed in one class period.

The questionnaires covered personal data, alcohol and other drug use, and the consequences of substance use. The substances of interest included marijuana; cocaine; crack

Grade Level of Sample by New York State Health Service Area
N = 34,516 (unweighted)

	Region 1 (Western NY)	Region 2 (Finger Lakes)	Region 3 (Central NY)	Region 4 (Southern Tier)	Region 5 Northeas-tern NY)	Region 6 (Hudson Valley)	Region 7 New York City)	Region 8 Nassau-Suffolk)
Grades 5-6	27% (670)	37% (833)	33% (960)	35% (414)	29% (700)	30% (912)	31% (5,129)	27% (1,038)
Grades 7-8	24% (604)	27% (618)	26% (761)	25% (300)	28% (684)	23% (719)	32% (5,242)	26% (990)
Grades 9-10	24% (601)	18% (405)	21% (614)	23% (271)	22% (535)	26% (799)	21% (3,465)	25% (963)
Grades 11-12	25% (636)	18% (419)	20% (573)	17% (203)	21% (525)	21% (635)	15% (2,505)	21% (793)
Totals	100% (2,511)	100% (2,275)	100% (2,908)	100% (1,188)	100% (2,444)	100% (3,065)	99%* (16,341)	99%* (3,784)

* Due to rounding, total adds to less than 100%.

or freebase; PCP; LSD; other hallucinogens (mescaline, magic mushrooms); amyl/butyl nitrite (e.g., Locker Room and Rush); nitrous oxide; other inhalants (e.g., glue/solvents and sprays); heroin and "look-alikes" (e.g., pseudo-speed or double dex, as well as imitation pills) as well as the nonmedical* use of prescription methadone; tranquilizers (e.g., Valium and Librium); sedatives (e.g., barbiturates, Quaalude); stimulants (e.g., amphetamines and prescription diet pills); analgesics (e.g., codeine, Darvon and Talwin); cough medicine; and steroids. In addition, a fake drug was included in the questionnaire in order to assist in the detection of invalid responses.

The separate questionnaires designed for the fifth and sixth graders and the seventh through twelfth graders differed in depth. The questionnaire for seventh through twelfth graders probed many more substances than the questionnaire for the younger students. Both questionnaires, however, maintained the anonymity of students and were available in Spanish as well as English.

Internal consistency checks were built into the questionnaires to permit elimination of inconsistent and frivolous responses. Of the 34,612 completed questionnaires, 96 were excluded because of gross inconsistency, leaving a sample of 34,516.

In order to conduct the survey, permission was secured from the administrators of the selected school districts and the private schools. Parental permission was not generally a requirement, however, the New York City Board of Education required that parents or guardians be notified in writing and given the opportunity to object if they did not want their children to participate in the survey (i.e., passive parental consent). In fact, five public school districts in New York City and one outside of the city imposed the more stringent requirement that parents sign and return a form giving permission for their children to participate in the survey (i.e., active parental consent). These procedural requirements may have affected findings for New York City as well as the state.

Even with parental permission, participation in the survey on the part of the student was voluntary. Students, however, were assured the anonymity of their responses. They were carefully instructed not to write their names anywhere on the questionnaire, and they inserted their completed questionnaires into sealed "ballot" boxes. The boxes of questionnaires were returned to the OASAS Bureau of Applied Studies, and then shipped to an out-of-state optical scanning firm. After a computer tape was generated, the original questionnaires were destroyed, further assuring the anonymity of each student's answers. After preliminary edit checks were made to detect frivolousness or inconsistencies, the data were aggregated by geographic area and the identifying information (i.e., school and school district) still on the computer tapes was no longer needed.

To ascertain the extent to which students in the classes selected to participate in the survey actually did participate, response rates were calculated for a randomly selected sample of 18 public school districts and 14 private schools. Response rates were calculated by dividing the

*Nonmedical use is defined in the questionnaire as use "on your own, without a doctor telling you to."

number of students who participated in the survey by the number of students who were eligible to participate (i.e., the number of students enrolled in the selected classes). The response rates for public and private schools were very similar. The rates for the public school districts ranged from 65 to 100 percent with a median value of 82 percent. As for the private schools, the range was from 63 percent to 100 percent with a median value of 85 percent. Of students present on the day the survey was administered, more than 90 percent completed the survey. Since the students did not generally know about the survey in advance, absence on the day the survey was conducted was probably unrelated to reluctance to participate.

In presenting the findings of this report, the sample of 34,516 was statistically weighted or projected to reflect drug use among the school students enrolled in public and private schools during 1989-1990. In short, each student in the survey represented a number of his or her peers in a particular school type, grade level, ethnic category, and region of the state. The degree of ethnic differentiation in the projection procedure depended on the diversity of ethnicity in that type of school in that part of the state. In areas of the state where ethnic diversity was relatively minimal, ethnicity was not a factor in the projection procedure.

Statistical adjustments also were made based on absenteeism from school. The responses of students who indicated skipping classes in the past 30 days and being truant since school began in September were statistically weighted to represent similarly enrolled students not in class on the day of the survey administration.

To secure a sample of youth who were no longer enrolled in school and thus could not be reached through a school survey, residents of facilities operated by the New York State Division for Youth (DFY) were surveyed. To obtain a probability sample of facilities, the resident population of DFY facilities was cross-classified by level of security and region within the state. The final sample consisted of 12 facilities, comprising 703 residents. The questionnaire completed by the DFY residents closely paralleled the questionnaire used in the larger school survey with minor changes to reflect differences between the situation of DFY residents and that of students enrolled in regular schools.